(b) if so, the actual position in this regard; and

(c) whether worthiness of these rail lines is checked before their laying?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL): (a) to (c) The released rails from busy lines are segregated into second hand serviceable rails *i.e.* rails still having balance life and scrap rails. The released serviceable rails are scanned ultrasonically before using them for renewal on lighter traffic routes.

AIR travel by senior railway officers

709. SHRI RAJU PARMAR:
SHRI BHAGATRAM MANHAR:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that senior officers of the railways/Railway Board are travelling mostly by air on sectors which are easily connected by fast trains;

(b) if so, what are the reasons therefor;

(c) how many senior officers have travelled by air during the last six months and the expenditure incurred on the air travel of each of them; and

(d) whether Government propose to issue directives to all the senior Railway Officers, restricting their travel mainly to rail travel and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL): (a) to (d) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the Sabha.

Economic growth of Railways

710. SHRI A. VIJAYA RAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken any steps to stop the sluggish economic growth of the Railways;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) what steps have been taken by the Railways to attract more freight traffic;

(d) whether Government have stopped all kinds of recruitments due to economic crisis; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL): (a) to (c) Rail transportation is basically a derived demand, which is entirely dependent upon the core sectors of the economy. Due to the general recession in the global and the national economy, coupled with gradual opening up and liberalization of the core sector, the desired level of freight traffic has not materialized. While there has been a considerable growth in both railway freight and passenger traffic in the past five decades, Railways' share of the freight segment has been declining despite best efforts.

The shortfall in movement of coal, raw material for steel plants, iron ore for export, petroleum products and fertilizer is a direct result of a drop in the output of these sectors. This is borne out by the negative/declining growth rate of infrastructure industries in the first five months of the current fiscal. Railways are, however, in a state of preparedness to carry any additional traffic that may be offered by the industry and the core sector during the year.

On the passenger front, it is anticipated that the target of passenger earnings envisaged in the Budget will be achieved.

Following measures have been taken by the Railways to attract freight traffic:—

(i) Domestic Division of Container Corporation of India has been activated to pick up piecemeal goods traffic.

(ii) Powers have been delegated to Zonal Railways to quote special lump-sum rate for short lead traffic moving in merry-go-round system.

(iii) Volume Discount Scheme and liberalized station to station rate have been notified.

(iv) Participation of private sector for setting up of freight terminals is being attempted. A pilot project near Gurgaon has been undertaken for this purpose.

(v) A scheme for running mini rakes has been notified in order to cater to demand for less than train load short lead traffic.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) Does not arise.

Hill puffer trains

†711. SHRI BACHANI LEKHRAJ: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering to run the hill puffer trains;

(b) if so, whether any steps have been taken by Government in this regard; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL): (a) to (c) There is nothing known as hill puffer train on Indian Railways. Steam trains are already in operation on New Jalpaiguri-Darjeeling section. Proposals for introduction of steam trains on Neral-Matheran and Kalka-Shimla hill sections are under consideration. The decision will be taken subject to viability of the project and availability of funds.

Railway Zones without General Managers

712. SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that three Zonal Railways, namely Eastern, South Eastern and Metro Headquartered in Kolkata are presently Headless, with no General Managers;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

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† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.